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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3303

February 26, 2013

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:

I want to thank you for standing firm against President Obama's attempts to replace the sequester that he requested with even more tax increases on the American people. As you have accurately pointed out on many occasions, Washington has a spending problem, and it's time for this President and this Congress to stop the wasteful spending that is bankrupting this nation.

I share your belief that while we urgently need to reduce the size of government, sequestration is not the right way to do it. I have offered up many suggestions for achieving equivalent spending reductions that would save just as much money as sequestration, and would avoid the unacceptable impact that sequestration will have on our military. Those ideas include eliminating foreign aid, repealing Obamacare, trimming the federal workforce, cutting the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, eliminating the federal Department of Education, and leaving Afghanistan before 2014. As you discuss the sequester with the President and Senate leaders, I urge you to put these ideas on the table.

In the meantime, I respectfully ask you to consider taking an important step to communicate that Congress recognizes the significant impact that sequestration will have on the military. As you know, members of Congress and their spouses frequently take taxpayer-funded overseas trips – commonly known as 'CODELS'. As media reports have highlighted, these trips often visit what many Americans would consider to be rather exotic locations. Most trips are taken using Department of Defense (DOD) aircraft, and the planning and execution consume considerable DOD and State Department resources. If sequestration is implemented on March 1st, DOD simply cannot afford to continue these trips.

Under current federal law (22 U.S.C. 1754), overseas trips taken by members of the House of Representatives must be approved by the Speaker of the House or a committee chair. If sequestration goes into effect, I urge you to announce that for the remainder of the fiscal year, neither you or any House committee chairs will be approving any overseas trips for members of the House of Representatives. The only exception should be for trips to visit United States military personnel in a war zone.

Taking this action would communicate to the American people and to the military that the House of Representatives recognizes the seriousness of the fiscal times we're in, and that it will adjust its behavior accordingly.

Again, I thank you for your leadership, and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Walter B. Jones".

Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress

A handwritten note in cursive script that says "Thank you!" followed by a long, sweeping horizontal flourish.